SO, WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS?

What is the good news that . . .

. . . motivated figures as different and as great as Mother Teresa and Vince Lombardi?

. . . propels missionaries all over the world to leave the comforts of home to share its message with strangers?

. . . leads some to give up family life in heroic service to the Church, while empowering others to commit to the generous, heroic love demanded by family life?

THE GAP

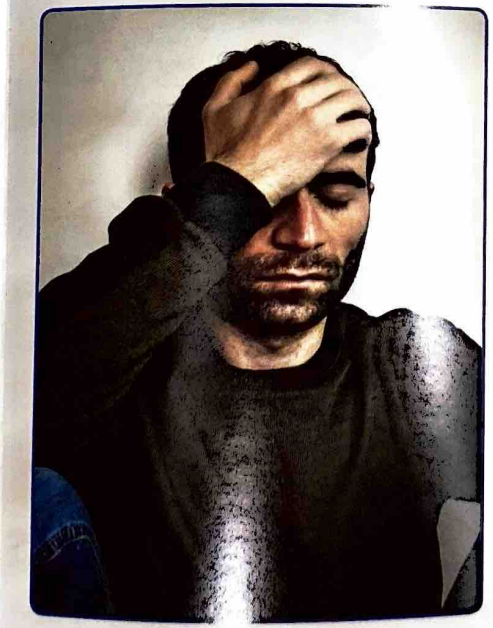
A profound gap exists in our lives and in our world. No matter what our religion, race, or location on the planet and whether we are rich, poor, or something in between, we all know this tension from experience: **there's a gap between what the world is and what we wish, hope, or believe it could be.**

And if we're honest, we likely feel the same tension deep within ourselves. On the one hand, I believe I am good and I have some things to offer this world. And yet I wish, or hope, or believe I could somehow become . . . better, happier, healthier, more peaceful, more loving, more effective.

More. Or less: less selfish, angry, anxious, busy, fearful, doubtful.

The gap between what we desire and what we experience is real.

In our efforts to confront the gap, we squelch our desire for a "better world" or a "better life." We lower our expectations, numb our pain, distract ourselves, or simply look the other way.



BROKEN BY SIN

Of all the Catholic teachings, the doctrine of original sin is probably the easiest to build a case for. Just look around; it's pretty clear that something is not right.

For Christians, "sin" is the broadest name we give this something that is not right. Sin causes many of the gaps in our lives and in our world. Sometimes it is our own sins causing gaps in our lives and in the lives of others. Sometimes the sins of other people harm us.

One thing is certain: we all contribute, in some way, not only to what is good in this world, but also to what is broken, what is sinful. For "all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

All people experience the urge to put themselves, another person, or something else in the center of their lives instead of God. This can wound our lives. While sin leads to wounds, wounds can also lead to sins. When we are hurting from wounds like abandonment, fear, shame, or hopelessness, we often turn to sin (rather than God) for comfort.

We may eat too much, drink too much, watch too much TV, binge on social media, escape into erotic or emotional fantasies, gossip about the wrongdoings of others, or strive desperately to prove our worth by attaining success or riches.

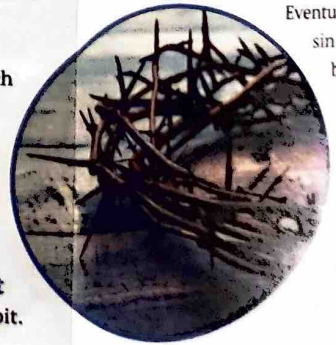
False comforts can distract us from our pain or bring quick relief, but they don't bridge the gap. They only numb the pain for a bit.

RESCUED BY GOD

While God has always aided those who seek him with a sincere heart, the ultimate help came when he sent Jesus to the world.

It is the most unimaginable, shocking claim: the Creator of all, the perfect, loving, and good God, became a man, lived in our broken world, and experienced the weight of our sin, while never sinning. He felt the gap of this world in his hunger, loneliness, weariness, disappointment, and pain.

Jesus could have remained in heaven with the Father, but he chose freely to surrender to the discomfort and pain of the gap out of love for us—in order to be completely united with us in our suffering and sin.



Eventually, the world's sin, your sin and my sin, killed Jesus, but in his rising from the dead, Jesus won the victory over sin. He completely overcame the [illegible] that separates the world [illegible]d, in Jesus [illegible] the gap.

THE BRIDGED GAP

God has given us a remedy for all of our brokenness. It is called grace. The grace of God, which we find in a relationship with Jesus, can heal every wound, cleanse every stain, break every chain, and triumph over every darkness the world has ever known.

Grace is not a mere "thing" or "substance." It is not magic. Nor is it quantifiable. Grace is not so much "it" or a "what" as a "Who." Grace is God's gift of his very self to his creation.

Grace is the gift of God's love poured out for us in big and small ways: from the ultimate gift of salvation to God the Father's quiet ready response to our every needs. **Grace is God himself walking with us through it all.**

When you are selfish and irritable, Jesus offers you his victory over this gap within yourself. **Though you may feel too weak to fix yourself, Jesus offers his life and his grace to you.**

This truth explains how St. Paul can proclaim in Ephesians 3:20-21:

> Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

FREE TO RESPOND

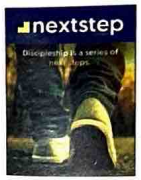
We follow a God whose very nature is love. And love cannot be forced. It cannot be demanded, coerced, or cajoled. Love requires a free response. This reality helps us understand that God will not force us to love him or others. He also does not simply zap us with grace, clean up the mess of the world in one fell swoop, or demand conformity to his will.

God moves first. He comes to us in a thousand ways—in every sacrament, in every page of Scripture, in every grace-filled moment with loved ones, in the cry of the poor, in each glorious sunset. All of these God moments of our lives are signs of God's love and his mission for us.

What an amazing mystery: **God longs to partner with us to bring more of his life into the world!**

God's "yes" to us is perfect; our "yes" to him is not yet perfect. But as we say "yes" again and again—we are changed, and the gap is bridged through grace and effort, over time of learning to love."

TAKE THE NEXT STEP



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